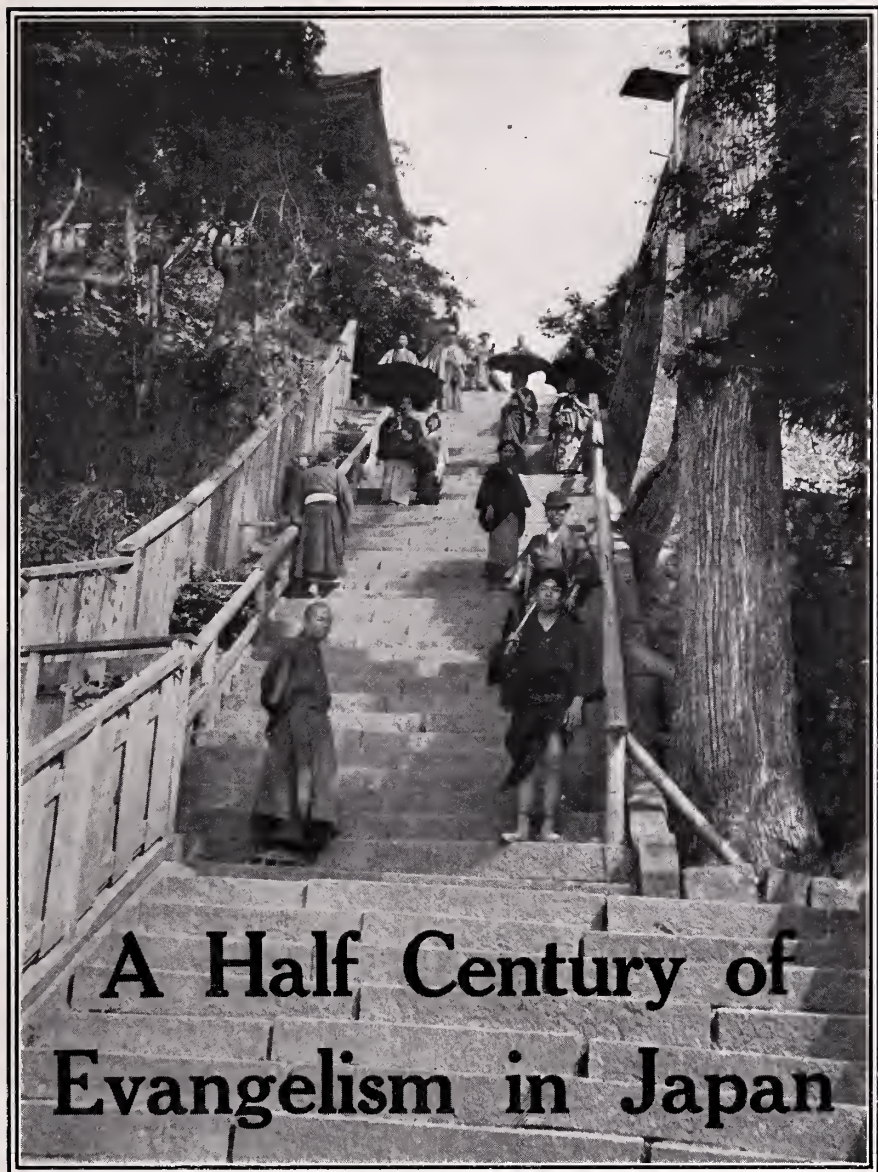


Japan

Fulton)

1755



BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.
156 Fifth Avenue, New York

A Half Century of Evangelism in Japan

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Dr. Verbeck begins his splendid History of Protestant Missions in Japan with these words: "When in the year 1854 it became known that the Empire of Japan, having concluded treaties of amity and peace with several Western powers, was to be reopened to foreign intercourse, the outside world generally, and friends of Christian Missions particularly, took deep interest in the event, for now at last, after long years of seclusion from the rest of mankind, this country, with its millions of inhabitants, was to be again made accessible to commerce and Christianity."

The treaties of amity and commerce above referred to came into operation in July, 1859. From that date it became possible for the representatives of Western nations to enter and reside in Japan. Our Presbyterian Church sent thither its first missionaries, Dr. and Mrs. Hepburn, in October of that year, so that we are particularly interested in the fact that the current year is the semi-centennial of the founding of Christian missions in Japan, since it is also the jubilee year of our Presbyterian work.

A grand celebration of the event is to take place in Tokyo the beginning of October under the auspices of the Evangelical Alliance, a body comprising all evangelical Protestant Japanese churches, and the Standing Committee of Co-operating Christian Missions, which is a body made up of representatives from all the different missions at work in Japan. But our Presbyterian Japanese Church, called the Church of Christ in Japan, being particularly interested in the event which gave birth to its life, concluded not to limit itself to the formal joint celebration which is to take place in the fall, and determined to make of the year an opportunity for a grand forward movement in evangelism, thus registering its gratitude to God and to the Mother Church in America by attempting to realize in a measure its missionary responsibility toward the millions in that country who either do not know of, or who have not as yet yielded to, the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And so early in March an inspirational gathering of several hundred leading Christians and Christian workers was held in

Tokyo, lasting a week. At this meeting, after rehearsing God's goodness to the Church all these years and making graceful acknowledgment of the profound indebtedness of the Church of Christ in Japan to the successful work carried on for fifty years by the missionaries, the evangelistic campaign for the year was outlined and launched with much enthusiasm. It is, therefore, to be a year pre-eminently of evangelistic effort in Japan. Hence this leaflet will bear wholly on that side of the work, though good Presbyterians are earnestly cautioned not to forget in their interest and prayers any of the forms of Christian work carried on in that country.

Forces at Work

(a) *The Japanese Church.*

As the fruit of fifty years of missionary labor we have in Japan to-day a strong, vigorous, self-governing Presbyterian Church. It has in it about 20,000 Christians, the largest Protestant body in the country. It is well organized into seven Presbyteries and a Synod. There are above seventy churches entirely self-supporting, and these independent churches, with their pastors and officers and local organizations, are powerful factors for evangelism in their several communities. The Church is thoroughly *evangelical* in its belief and in its teaching, there being, so far as the writer is aware, not a single minister in the whole Church who is regarded as loose or unorthodox in theology. The Church is also strongly *evangelistic* in spirit and practice. The last few years in particular it has awakened to a sense of its election of God for a purpose, which is that it is to become a missionary church first of all to its own people, and ultimately to its neighbors in the Orient. It has an independent Board of Missions with one Field Secretary, collects funds from the local Churches with which it aids weak and dependent churches, and carries on evangelistic work in a dozen or more centers. Particularly has its work been effective among the large and growing communities of Japanese in Formosa, Korea and Manchuria, and as a happy feature of the Jubilee Celebration it voted, with much enthusiasm, *to undertake its first foreign missionary work* among the Chinese in Tientsin. The Church has attained marked success also in the last two or three years in planning and carrying out *special evangelistic* campaigns in different localities, where, after careful preparation by local workers, a few of the best speakers are sent to conduct a series of meetings lasting several days, and as the result of one of these campaigns it is not infrequent to enroll from fifty to a hundred inquirers or deciders for Christ.



Christian Workers in the Naniwa Presbytery, one of the Seven Presbyteries of the Church of Christ in Japan

That there has been thus raised up in Japan a church of such dimensions and power and fervor, worthy in every respect to be trusted and well qualified for leadership in the great work of christianizing the fifty millions of her people, is a matter for which we should be profoundly grateful.

(b) *The Missions.*

Four American Presbyterian churches are at work in Japan to-day, namely, the German Reformed, the Dutch Reformed, the Presbyterian North and the Presbyterian South. The German Reformed Church has one mission, with headquarters at Sendai, in the northern part of the main island. The Dutch Reformed Church has two missions, one in Tokyo and Yokohama, and the other in the extreme south, working the Island of Kyushu. The Southern Presbyterian Church has one mission, working in Central Japan and the large Island of Shikoku; while our own Church has two missions—the East, with headquarters in Tokyo, and

working also the northern Island of Hokkaido, and the West Mission, whose field of operations is the whole western part of Japan, and recently, following the course of the Japanese Empire, has extended its work to the large Japanese immigrant population in Korea and Manchuria. In addition to the above six Presbyterian missions, there is also the Woman's Union Mission in Yokohama, which is allied with the Presbyterians in the work. All these missions are co-operating to build up one Japanese Church, called the Church of Christ in Japan, and although the missionary organizations are entirely distinct and their work arranged so as not to conflict or overlap, the fruit of all the work goes into this one common Church, and the fact that this is so—that instead of four or five weak, struggling and more or less competitive denominations we have one strong, vigorous Presbyterian Church in Japan, unconscious of any family division—is another matter for which we should never cease to be thankful.

Our East Japan Mission, with twenty-five missionaries all told, has a considerable amount of evangelistic work in the capital and in places bordering upon the city, but a large part of their work there has developed into churches which have either become independent, or are rapidly approaching that stage. In the Island of Hokkaido, to the extreme north, however, there is purely virgin soil, and the work is carried on from three centers or mission stations, namely, Otaru, Sapporo and Asahigawa.

Our West Japan Mission has an even half-hundred missionaries located in fifteen separate mission stations. These stations are: Kanazawa and Fukui, on the northwest coast; Kyoto and Osaka, in the center; Wakayama, Tanabe, Yamada and Tsu, to the southeast; Hiroshima, Kure, Matsuyama and Yamaguchi, to the southwest, and across the Straits is the station of Seoul, in Korea, and still farther westward is Dalny and Port Arthur, in Manchuria. Around each of these fifteen stations where missionaries are located are grouped a number of out-stations where Japanese workers are placed, who work under the supervision of the missionaries. Only a small portion of this work has as yet developed into organized churches, though groups of believers are found in all the stations and most of the out-stations. The Missions' sphere of work in contrast to that of the Church is largely the *pioneer* work. The missionaries, with their evangelistic helpers, go out into the regions beyond—the new cities and towns—to start the work, lay the foundations, and carry it until the Church becomes largely or wholly self-supporting, when the missionaries pass on again into newer work, leaving to the Church the further evangelization of the community.

The Forms of Work

(a) *Precaching.*

There is comparatively little street or outdoor preaching done in Japan. The authorities are rather strict in regard to it, though in some places it is allowed. The general practice is to hold meetings under roof. There are many street chapels, houses opening directly on the streets, where the ear of the passerby is caught, and he stands a few minutes before the entrance or drops into a seat long enough to get a few seeds of Gospel truth in his heart. Then there are chapels in a little more retired quarter, where the people come specially to hear, and, again, the churches where regular services are held pretty much as in our own country. Theatres and large public halls are occasionally used when particularly prominent speakers are present, though not so much so as in former days.

(b) *Sunday-School Work.*

Every church has its Sunday-school, which is made up both of adults and children. They are divided into classes and instructed in the ordinary way, for the most part using the International Lessons. In the chapels children's meetings are held on week days or the Sabbath, and there large numbers of the children of unbelievers are gathered together, taught to sing and instructed in the fundamentals of Christianity through Bible and other stories. It is difficult to estimate the value of this Sunday-school work, carried on perseveringly from the beginning, and its fruit is now very evident from the fact that to-day nearly every candidate for baptism confesses to have heard the teachings of Christianity first in some Sunday-school.

(c) *Bible Classes.*

The Bible is very extensively possessed by the Japanese to-day, and many are eager to know what it teaches. Students like to study it in English, and most missionaries have all the Bible classes they can manage. The writer has for about ten years conducted a Bible class by correspondence, which now numbers 2,200 members, scattered all over Japan. The Bible to-day may be regarded as the most widely distributed and most seriously and intelligently studied religious book in the Japanese Empire. This Bible study in many cases makes professing Christians, of course, but it also has produced thousands who, though not making a public profession of their faith, are molding their thought and ideals and their conduct, too, according to its teachings.

(d) *Personal Work and Visitation.*

Preaching in Japan is largely useful to attract attention and to awaken inquiry. Rarely is a man converted by simply listening to the Gospel from the pulpit. When he is interested, he either asks the preacher or the preacher finds him out, and the rest is accomplished through personal contact, heart-to-heart conversation and Bible study under instruction. The preacher's sanctum or the inquirer's home is the place of struggle and final victory. The most successful Christian workers are those who spend much time in personal work and visitation.

Changes and Progress

The Japan of fifty years ago and the Japan of to-day are very different. Politically, socially, economically, mentally, morally and religiously, the country has been reborn, but the cause of Christ alone concerns us here. Fifty years ago there were no missionaries in Japan, no Christians, no Japanese workers, no churches or chapels, no Bible nor hymn-book, nor Christian schools, nor benevolent institutions of any kind. To-day there are nearly eight hundred missionaries of all denominations, perhaps eighty thousand Protestant Christians, upwards of thirteen hundred Japanese pastors, evangelists and Bible women, and about the same number of churches and chapels, with property valued at \$800,000, and raising, approximately, \$150,000 annually for Christian work. The whole Bible is translated into the vernacular and sold freely in book-stores throughout the country and is being distributed among the people, either in whole or in part, and mainly by sales, at the rate of two to three hundred thousand copies per year. The Christian hymn-book of several hundred hymns and tunes is one of the most popular publications in circulation, there being a great demand for it even among non-Christians. There are 186 Christian schools of all classes and grades holding property valued at one and a half million dollars, seven Christian publishing houses issuing seventy million pages annually, and fifty-one Christian orphanages, homes, hospitals and industrial establishments, representing the benevolent and practical side of the Gospel. These are some of the direct and tangible results of a half-century of Christian work. And there are others that are indirect and in a sense intangible. The laws and institutions of Japan are built upon Christian models. The spirit and policy of the Japanese Government is about as nearly Christian as any government to be found anywhere. The moral standards of the people have been wonderfully changed in a Christian direction, both as to personal and domestic life. The Christian man and the Chris-

tian home is confessedly the goal toward which the nation is striving. Social customs inconsistent with Christian practice are rapidly disappearing, and the ideals which commonly prevail among Christian people are, in germ at least, firmly implanted in the breasts of the people of Japan. The silent progress of the Gospel, working its way like leaven, is responsible for these remarkable changes in the various aspects of the national life and the growth of the kingdom in this direct and indirect way among a people of such large promise in the world's affairs is encouraging enough to awaken in every Christian heart a song of thanksgiving and to inspire us all to still greater effort for the future.

The Call of the Present

The opportunity in Japan is great. Fifty million people are there, and we cannot be content with eighty thousand Christians. Neither can we be satisfied until the many who to-day are building upon Christian foundations and cherishing Christian ideals are led into open avowal of Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, and the story of the Gospel must be told, also, to the millions who as yet have never heard it. There are some cities, many more towns, and myriads of villages which remain to be evangelized. There are two-thirds to three-quarters of the total population of Japan dwelling in villages, and the work of reaching these village people, in many respects the bulwark of the Empire, has not yet been begun. We must strike at this problem very soon. In recent years the Lord is raising up many promising Japanese workers who are ready to consecrate themselves to this evangelistic work, and these workers are a challenge to the Christian Church to provide the material support necessary in order that we may move forward toward the completion of our mission to make Japan an out-and-out Christian nation. If the Presbyterian Church would put into the hands of the Board enough money to satisfy the needs of the mission and allow the missionaries to do all that is in their hearts to do, instead of discouraging them with a meagre amount of funds which ties their hands or compels them to carry on their work in a niggardly and unbusinesslike fashion, then we should see results in the near future that would surpass all that has gone before and make the next half century witness the fulfillment of our hopes and also of the Saviour's last command.

